

out such structures as those in Peking was by no means decadent. Yung Lo sought to promote the prosperity of his realm. He encouraged the migration of settlers into the regions laid waste in the wars which had brought him to the throne. For the purpose of facilitating the transportation of rice to Peking and of avoiding the dangerous sea passage around the Shantung promontory, he had the Grand Canal improved. Although his personal inclination was toward Buddhism, especially of the Tibetan type, officially he pursued his father's policy of strengthening the Confucian cult—by showing favor to the Hanlin Academy, by encouraging the study of the Confucian Classics, by honoring Confucius, and by maintaining the civil service examinations. He even endeavored to restrict the numbers of Buddhist monks by ordering some of them to return to secular life. It was under his orders that one of the most gigantic compilations ever made, the *Yung Lo Ta Tien*, was accomplished—a vast collection of excerpts and entire works from the mass of Chinese literature. So huge was it that the cost of printing appalled even the imperial treasury and, except for some excerpts, it remained in manuscript only.

POLITICAL HISTORY: THE SUCCESSORS OF YUNG LO

During the remaining years that it retained the mandate of Heaven, the family of Chu Yuan-chang produced no monarchs of the vigor and ability of Hung Wu and Yung Lo. Much of the time the Empire was fairly prosperous—although often we hear of agricultural distress and even famine—but for the more than two centuries which elapsed between the death of Yung Lo and

the overthrow of the dynasty, no ruler emerged at all comparable with the chief rulers of preceding lines. No noteworthy effort was made to extend the frontiers: in area the Empire shrank rather than expanded. Before the fifteenth century was half gone, Annam had regained its independence. Tribute from the states across the seas gradually lapsed. Fighting with the Mongols was frequent, and the tide of battle did not always flow in favor of the Chinese. On one occasion, indeed, about the middle of the fifteenth century, a Mongol army defeated and captured the Ming Emperor, and in the ensuing peace the Chinese renounced all claim to intervention in Mongolian affairs. It seems to have been more because of the weakness of her neighbors than her own